We have with us to-night

Samuel G Blythe

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WE HAVE WITH US TO-NIGHT

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WHAT HAPPENS AT THAT GREAT
AMERICAN INSTITUTION
THE BANQUET

✠

By SAMUEL G. BLYTHE

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HENRY ALTEMUS COMPANY

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WE HAVE WITH US TO-NIGHT

THE TIME AND PLACE

THE society—any society, in any city—is giving a banquet. The diners have had their food hurled at them and have hurled it into them. A long and imposing toast-list has been prepared and the speakers are at the head-table trying not to appear self-conscious. Cigars are lighted. The orchestra is playing The Merry Widow. A few of the younger set are humming along with the tune. The ladies have arrived in the gallery. The

Toastmaster rises, taps with the gavel, glances around the room and smiles complacently. There is a great noise of chairs being shifted so everybody can face the head-table. The Toastmaster straightens his tie, pats his shirt-bosom and begins.

WE HAVE WITH US TO-NIGHT

THE Toastmaster: "Ahem-m! Ahem-m-m! Gentlemen will be in order. Gentlemen will please be in order. The waiters will leave the room. The—waiters — will — leave — the — room. Ahem-m-m! Gentlemen of the society and our honored guests: Before beginning the regular toasts of the evening I desire to say, on the occasion of this most auspicious occasion, that this occasion is one

of the most auspicious occasions I have ever had occasion—that is, this is a grand event. The society which has so foolishly selected me to be Toastmaster (gently derisive laughter and a self-satisfied smile from the speaker) is now entering on its sixty-ufth, that is its sufty-exth, I mean to say its sixty-fifth year of prosperous existence, an existence which has existed for sixty-five years.

"During those ixty-sifth, I would say those sixty-fifth, I mean those sixty-five years, we have been most

prosperous. It gives me great pleasure, on this auspicious occasion, to congratulate you all on your prosperous existence and to say to you, in the words of the poet:

"'The world is good, and the people are good,
And we're all good fellows together.'
(Loud cheers.)

"We have with us to-night one of our most distinguished jurists, Judge John Bolus, of the Superior Court, and that word court reminds me of a good story my father used to tell when I was a boy with great

glee—that is, with great glee when I was a boy. My father was a good deal of a wag in a sly way, and one night, when he met a Milesian friend of his on the street, he said: 'Paddy, where are you going?' 'To court, sor!' Paddy replied. 'But,' said my father with a chuckle, 'court doesn't sit at night.' 'Well, be jabers,' Paddy replied, to the great amusement of my father, 'ye don't think I'd court standin' up, do ye?'"

Pause for laughter. Judge Bolus straightens his tie. A few titters

here and there. The Toastmaster looks disappointed, but takes a fresh start. "Of course, there's nothing personal in that, but my father used to tell it as a specimen of the ready wit of the Irish. I don't suppose Judge Bolus ever had any experience in that kind of court; but I beg the Judge's pardon, for I perceive the charming Mrs. Bolus in the gallery. However, I now have the honor to present to you Judge John Bolus, who will respond to the toast, 'The Majesty of the Law.' Judge Bolus!"

Judge Bolus: "Mr. Toastmaster and gentlemen: Before proceeding with the necessarily brief consideration of the topic assigned to me as a subject of my remarks this evening, I am constrained to relate an anecdote of an occurrence that I noticed in my practice some years ago, which illustrates that even the humdrum life of the lawyer and jurist, devoted to the interpretation and enforcement of the law, may sometimes be lightened by what you may call flashes of merriment, superinduced by events which more

or less frequently are observed within the rather restricted limits of the practitioners of our jealous mistress, the law (for the law is a jealous mistress, as I have had occasion to remark). Not that the rewards are not commensurate with the service we give her, but that she demands those constant services without which no one can successfully pursue the practice and interpretation of our statutes, which reminds me that one of the great evils of this, our younger generation, is the lamentable lack of concentration which, if persisted

in, will inevitably bring down the Republic to wreck and ruin ; for, I may say, no one can succeed in the law, in any of the learned professions, much less in the humbler walks of life, without constant application, which is a lesson I desire to bring home to my younger hearers here to-night, a lesson fraught with great consequences and more important than any other I, perhaps, might give, and that is that I have observed, with alarm, a growing tendency on the part of our youth toward a lack of respect, a non-

acknowledgment, if I may use the term, of the veneration due those of us who have borne the brunt of the battle during the formative days of the Republic; for I well remember, when I was a mere boy, of hearing Daniel Webster, on a famous occasion, refer to what I have here set forth, not only as a danger at that time, but with the inspired eye of prophecy, as predicting this somewhat anomalous condition of affairs, he being, to my mind, the greatest of our orators, although that contention is open to argument,

as are all others, of course ; the law being, as I have said, only established by interpretation of its various complex phases and——"

A Voice: "What's the answer?"

Another Voice: "Tell the story."

Judge Bolus stops, glares around the room, from which comes the loud buzz of conversation, takes a drink of water and proceeds: "Ah, yes, I was about to relate an anecdote concerning an experience I had while I was a student in the office of the late Judge Smith, a most learned man, and a man who

did more to establish that respect for the law and its traditions in this community, for, as I shall show, the law has its traditions and its precedents and its conventionalities, but here and there is hidden a romance, and as the late Judge Brown said to me—a most learned man and most upright jurist was Judge Brown, and I well remember——"

Chorus of young men in the corner: "How dry I am! How dry I am! Nobody knows how dry I am!"

The Toastmaster: "Order, gen-

tlemen, order, while Judge Bolus concludes his very interesting remarks."

A Voice: "Tell him to hire a hall."

Another Voice: "How about that anecdote?"

Judge Bolus rambles on for half an hour while the diners gather in groups and talk loudly. The Toastmaster raps for order now and then, occasionally taking out his watch and looking at it in a worried way and then glancing at the Judge.

Finally, the Judge sits down, not having told the anecdote, and the diners applaud wildly, shifting their chairs so they all face the head-table again.

The Toastmaster: "Now, gentlemen, we have with us to-night one to whom it is always a delight to listen, our old friend, Mr. Charles Cutie, the celebrated wit, always so spontaneous and happy. It may not be fair to tell it, but I remember one occasion when I was most enjoyably impressed with Mr. Cutie's power of repartee. I was

walking up the street one day and I met him. 'Good-morning, Charles,' I said, following out my usual custom of exchanging greetings courteously with all my friends. 'No,' he replied, quick as a flash, 'it is a bad morning. I have a toothache.'"

Hearty laughter by Mr. Cutie and the Toastmaster. The Toastmaster continues: "Gentlemen, I have the honor to present Mr. Charles Cutie, who will respond to the toast: 'A little nonsense now and then is relished by the best of men.'"

Mr. Cutie rises, pushes back his chair, takes a large roll of manuscript out of his pocket, and holds it up so all can see.

A Voice: "For Heaven's sake, Charley, put something over. It's fierce, so far."

Mr. Cutie: "Having here the carefully prepared manuscript of my purely extemporaneous speech——" Waits for the laugh, which is thin and scattering. "As I said, having here the carefully prepared manuscript of my purely extemporaneous speech——" Waits

for the laugh again. Gets a good one. Nods approvingly and goes on: "I am reminded of the man who said to the other man: 'Did you ever hear the story of the eggs?' 'No,' the other replied. 'Too bad.'"

Fat man at the middle table explodes: "Ho, ho! Too bad—two bad! Fine!" Some handclapping.

"But speaking about eggs," continues Mr. Cutie, "there is another one that is almost eggsactly"—fat man explodes again—"almost eggsactly in the same line. 'Did you

ever hear the story of the hard-boiled eggs?' a man asked another. 'No.' 'Can't be beat.'"

Mr. Cutie pauses. Laughter begins slowly, but soon gets general. He waits patiently until the last cackle has subsided, nods approvingly again, and proceeds: "And eggs always remind me of custard pie. Once an Englishman and an American were dining together and the waiter came in and said: 'Apple pie, peach pie, plum pie, mince pie, pumpkin pie, squash pie, sweet potato pie, gooseberry pie,

grape pie?' The American looked up and said: 'What's the matter with the custard pie?' Next day the Englishman said: 'Excuse me, my friend, but what was the matter with the custard pie?'"

A Voice: "Too bad."

Loud laughter and cries of: "Go on, Charley."

"An Englishman," continues Mr. Cutie, with a pleased smile, "rarely sees the point of a joke. It is astonishing how they can miss or spoil a joke in telling it. I remember telling an Englishman about a

butchers' parade I saw in Chicago, and one float had an enormous sausage on it. I told the Englishman I never heard of such a thing."

Pause for laughter. Everybody looks puzzled. Then Mr. Cutie blushes and says hastily : " Pardon me, what I said to the Englishman was I never sausage a thing. Odd that I should have made that mistake. But, speaking about sausage, I went into a German restaurant the other day and asked for some. You know the German word for sausage is wurst. 'What's that?'

I asked when the waiter brought me my sausage. 'Wurst,' he replied. 'Well,' I said, 'if that's the worst, bring me some of the best.'"

Another pause. Three voices: "Too bad."

Somewhat flustered, Mr. Cutie draws a long breath and starts again:

"Now, I am an optimist. I always look on the bright side of things. You can make a joke out of almost everything, you know, and to do so adds to the sunniness of life. Let us all be sunny. Did

you ever hear of the Irishman who had both legs cut off by the train? A friend was sympathizing with him. 'Sure,' says Mike, 'it might have been worse. Suppose I was an actor.'"

He pauses for the laugh. Nobody laughs. Seventeen voices: "Too bad."

"Oh," exclaims Mr. Cutie, "I got that wrong. What the Irishman said was: 'Suppose I was a chorus girl!'"

Sits down hurriedly, much embarrassed. Loud applause.

The Toastmaster: "Now, gentlemen, we have with us to-night Mr. Quintus J. Skinnem, one of the greatest financiers of this country, who has consented to address us briefly on 'The Financial Supremacy of the United States.' And, speaking of finance, it might not, perhaps, be out of order to repeat in this company a remark made by my son, only seventeen, and very bright for his age. We were discussing finance at the dinner-table the other night and my son remarked: 'Father, why is it the rich people

have all the money?' Bright, eh? Well, I couldn't answer him, of course, for even a child can ask questions a gentleman cannot answer, no matter how well he is posted, but, undoubtedly, Mr. Skinnem can. Gentlemen, Mr. Skinnem."

Mr. Skinnem rises. "Mr. Toastmaster and gentlemen: It is but just to say to you that my activities have led me to other paths than public speaking, and I fear I am a mere novice at it. However, I am reminded of a little story about

two Germans—you will pardon the absence of the dialect, gentlemen—who were going up the street and came to a bank. 'What's that?' asked one. 'A bank,' the other replied promptly. 'What's a bank?' 'A place where they keep money.' 'Whose money?' 'Everybody's——'"

A Voice: "That's what you did during the panic, all right."

Mr. Skinnem is visibly annoyed and looks at the Toastmaster, who motions him to go on. "But, of course, that is a mere anecdote.

What I have to say I shall say briefly. I shall not detain you long. I shall be short and to the point. Bearing on this subject I have here an article from the Bankers' Magazine which I shall crave your indulgence while I read."

Reads long, involved financial article in high voice for half an hour. Forty or fifty diners go out of the hall to the anteroom. Loud buzz of conversation. Mr. Skinnem drones on until the Toastmaster gets so nervous he bangs on the table with his watch, for order,

and puts his gavel in his waistcoat pocket. Finally, after forty-five minutes, Mr. Skinnem concludes by saying: "These, gentlemen, are my sentiments, although briefly expressed. I thank you."

The Toastmaster raps for order. "The gentlemen will please resume their seats." Great scuffing of chairs. The guests return from the anteroom.

The Toastmaster: "Now, my friends, it is with peculiar pleasure that I announce the next speaker. I am glad he is with us to-night.

We are all proud of what is our proudest boast of our proud city. I refer, of course, to the International and Interoceanic University which nestles so proudly on the proud hills above our proud city. I am proud,—no, I am glad that we have him with us to-night—"

A Voice: "Who? The University?"

Toastmaster (hastily): "No, of course, I mean the president of the University, Dr. Elihu J. Beegin, one, if I may say it, of Nature's noblemen."

A Voice: "Go on and say it."

Toastmaster (sternly): "I have said it and I mean it, too. In the language of the poet—maybe it wasn't a poet, but it was an author, anyhow—in the language of the author: 'His life is gentle, and the elements so mixed up in him, that Nature might stand up—of course, Nature couldn't stand up, you know—that is what we call a figure of speech, but, as I was saying, that Nature might stand up in him—no—and say to all the world, "This was a——"'"

A Voice: "A dead one."

The Toastmaster raps vigorously with his gavel and looks reprovingly in the direction of this latest interruption. "But, of course, that was a joke, and I am proud, as I have said, to present to you Dr. Elihu J. Beegin, who will respond to the toast, 'Education.'"

Dr. Beegin is discovered to be a short, thin man with flowing side-whiskers which are white. He rises, pulls nervously at his whiskers, shuffles some notes which he has laid on the table and begins:

"My dear friends, or, I may say, my dear, dear friends: It is with a feeling of great trepidation that I enter in the oratorical lists on this brilliant occasion, for, being a man of studious habit of mind, I am not often prone to speak in public on occasions of this kind. However, I feel it my duty to address you to-night inasmuch as I have been assigned to the toast, 'Education,' which is the subject nearest and dearest to my heart; for we all know that without education we would have very few of the

blessings we now enjoy. Education, I may say, brings much to us. It is the wellspring of human happiness, and without it we would be desolate indeed. And, having made this thought clear, and while I am on my feet, I shall now present for your consideration a few facts that I deem worthy of your close attention."

Dr. Beegin then proceeds to a long and elaborate argument showing why it is the duty of those present and all others in the city to subscribe liberally to the university.

After fifteen minutes of it the young men in the corner begin singing:

No booze to-night, no booze to-night;
With a face like a horse and buggy.
No booze to-night, no booze to-night—
Oh, fireman, save my ch-e-e-ild!
Oh, fireman, save my ch-e-e-ild!
She cries in accents wild.
The fireman tries as best he can,
But the child is bigger than the fireman.

Others take up the song and Dr. Beegin, after struggling against it for a few moments, shakes his head sadly and sits down.

The Toastmaster: "While I would be the last to interfere in the

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enjoyment of our members and guests, I think it no more than right to let our speakers speak ——"

The young men in the corner strike up: "Old Dr. Beegin's a good old soul," and when they have finished, the Toastmaster hurriedly says: "Proceeding with the programme, it gives me great pleasure to say that the next toast on the list is one which we all would enjoy responding to, but, of course, that is out of the question. However, we have with us to-night a gentleman who is so peculiarly fitted to re-

spond to this toast that I feel sure you will welcome his eloquent remarks on this charming subject, 'The Ladies!' Does that not stir tender thoughts in every manly breast? It does in mine, I know. 'The Ladies!' What was it the poet said——"

A Voice: "Oh, cut out what the poet said and let's hear what's coming."

The Toastmaster: "As I was saying, the poet says—but it has escaped me now. However, many poets have said nice things about

the ladies, and so, I am sure, will our next speaker, the Honorable Percy Cecil Swope. Mr. Swope."

Mr. Swope is a tall, pale young man, with a rapt expression. He rises slowly, looks confidently around the room, raises his hand impressively and begins: "Mr. Toastmaster and gentlemen! It is indeed a pleasure, a great pleasure to be here to-night and to be asked to respond to such a delightful toast as, 'The Ladies,' the lights, as I may say, of our lives——"

Mr. Swope pauses and looks expectantly at the gallery, where the ladies are seated. He gets a round of applause, pulls down his waistcoat and starts again: "What would life be to us without the ladies? What would life be to us, I repeat, without the ladies——"

A Voice: "A good deal cheaper than it is."

Mr. Swope, ignoring the interruption: "What would life be to us without the ladies, whose bright eyes rain influence, whose ministering hands ever smooth the wrinkles

from our brows, whose soft arms encircle our necks in times of storm and stress, who give us the joys of their sweet companionship, who lighten the burdens of our days, who watch and guard us, who are angels from Heaven sent to cheer our lives, who charm us with the beauty of their faces and their forms and who elevate us by the priceless example of their purity and tenderness !

"The Ladies! Ah, would that I could express the thoughts that well within me when I contemplate

these fairest of their sex, but this poor tongue of mine, unskilled to the fashioning of these measures of poetry that should sing their manifold graces, accomplishments and angelic attributes, must needs take recourse in the words of another, who had that skill that I unfortunately lack, and I refer, of course, to the late Mr. P. B. Shelley—his first name was Percy, like mine—who said, as I would say of all within the purview of my gaze, or elsewhere, of course, 'A perfect woman——' excuse me, ladies, for

saying woman—that's the way he wrote it—and far be it from me to correct the words of my namesake —'A perfect woman, nobly planned, to warn, to comfort and command.'"

Dr. Beegin jumps up hastily. "Pardon me, Mr. Swope," he says, "but I cannot let that error pass unnoticed. Shelley did not say that. It was Wordsworth."

A Voice: "Great hevings! and Percy named for him, too."

Mr. Swope sits down, blushing hotly.

The Toastmaster : "Now, gentlemen, we shall have one of the real treats of this very successful evening. We have with us to-night Mr. J. Howard Merry, a celebrated dialect story-teller, who has had many offers to go on the stage, but prefers to remain here in our midst. He will tell us a few dialect stories."

Mr. Merry travels for a cracker house, and he is thoroughly self-possessed when he rises. He explains, carefully, that the story he is to tell concerns a conversation

between a German, an Englishman, a negro, a Frenchman, an Irishman, an Italian and a Swede.

This is what it sounds like : "I was walking down the street the other day and I came across a bunch of foreigners, mostly, having a powwow, and naturally, I stopped to listen."

A Voice: "What dialect is that?"

Mr. Merry looks pained and says: "Why, that's English. It's just the introduction, you know."

Same Voice : "Oh ! I didn't recognize it."

Mr. Merry laughs uneasily and gets off his dialects with this result: "Don'd you understandings noddings? Blime me, old chawp, I cawn't do it, y'knaw. 'Deed, boss, dat's shorely gwine foh shuah. We, we, it is ze parfait sing. Oh, b'jabbers, divil an a' do I know what is it at all, at all. Getta d' mon', getta' da mon' alla d' day. Yim Yonson he ban gude Sweede fallar."

There is a lot more of this sort of thing, and when Mr. Merry gets well warmed to it nobody can tell anything he says.

A Voice: "If that's a dialect story I move somebody sings a hymn."

And Mr. Merry sits down.

The Toastmaster: "I have often heard it mentioned that the pen is mightier than the sword, and I have no doubt it is true. I am always glad to mention that fact, for I feel that I am, in a way, engaged in literature to some extent myself, being, I might as well confess, engaged in writing a play. Still, it is not this branch of literature I have in mind, for we have

with us to-night one who has often proved that his pen is mightier than the sword. I refer, of course, to the Honorable Calvin T. Tansey, editor of our leading newspaper, 'The Beacon,' who will address us on the importance of maintaining in this country a free and uncensored press. Gentlemen, I bespeak your kindest attention for Mr. Tansey, whom I now present."

Mr. Tansey is a man about sixty years old, with a short gray beard and his upper lip shaved clean, showing a very determined looking

mouth. He jumps up, shoots his cuffs, pushes back his chair and begins to talk at the rate of two hundred words a minute. It sounds like this:

" Mrtoastmaster'n'gen'l'menIdo notthinkitisopentoargumentthatthe pressisthebulwarkofthenationsliberties."

He tells why, citing many instances where a free and untrammeled press has marched boldly to the front and yanked the nation out of the slough of difficulty. He rips it out for six minutes, waves his

arms wildly and sits down as suddenly as he got up.

There are loud cheers. "Good boy, Tansey!" shouts some one. "You knew when to quit, anyhow."

The Toastmaster: "While listening to the very interesting address of Mr. Tansey, the thought struck me that this would be an opportune time to hear from one of our own number, so I shall call on Colonel W. J. Pogus, who is with us tonight, to say a few words about our Society."

Colonel Pogus, who has been making signs to the Toastmaster for an hour and has written him several notes, besides going over and whispering to him four times, gets up at the extreme end of the speakers' table.

"I am utterly surprised at being called up by our worthy Toastmaster," he says, "but now that I am on my feet I shall endeavor to respond in fitting terms to the subject which he has assigned me, although, unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, I fear that my

humble efforts will not do much to entertain you. However, it has been in my mind for a long time to say a few words to the Society, and I thank the worthy Toastmaster for giving me this opportunity."

Colonel Pogus thereupon produces a large roll of manuscript from his tail pocket and proceeds to read, in a high, piping voice, a history of the Society from its inception. After a few minutes of this the diners begin talking to one another. The noise grows louder. Colonel Pogus stops, raises his hand

and shouts: "I desire to say that you shall not deter me. I shall read this if I have to stay here all night!"

He proceeds. It is dry as dust. Finally, he censures some of the younger members of the Society for failing in what he says are their duties, and there is a hiss.

The Colonel stops again. "I have heard it said," he shouts, "that the only animals that hiss are snakes and geese."

A Voice: "Now will you be good?"

The Colonel continues. Presently the younger set let go a yell:

Pogus ! Pogus ! Pogus !
'Rah ! 'Rah ! 'Rah !
Bogus ! Bogus ! Bogus !
'Rah ! 'Rah ! 'Rah !

They keep this up for ten minutes and then the Colonel sits down with his speech not half read.

The Toastmaster: "Never mind, Colonel Pogus, boys will be boys, and you can have it printed." (To the assemblage): "Now, gentlemen, we have with us to-night one of our most distinguished states-

men, the Honorable Philander McGuff, one of our members of Congress. Mr. McGuff came all the way from Washington to address us, and he will speak on 'Some of the Problems That Confront Our Government.'"

A Voice: "'Rah for McGuff!"

"I may say," continues the Toastmaster, "that Mr. McGuff is especially fitted to discuss this important topic for our benefit to-night, as he has been in Congress almost a year, and is fully informed as to

the needs of the country. Mr. McGuff!"

The Honorable Philander arises, pushes back his chair impetuously, runs his fingers through his hair and says: "Mr. Toastmaster and gentlemen: It is, indeed, an honor, a ge-reat, a splendid honor, to be permitted to speak to so brilliant, so distinguished and, I may say, so intellectual a gathering. During my long service in Congress I have often attended banquets, but never before have I seen so magnificent an assemblage of fair women and

brave men as I see here before me tuh-night. Such an incentive would stir any man, even though he had but a clod in his breast instead of a heart--and I have a heart here that beats warmly for my fellow-men—would stir any man, even though he was unaccustomed to public speaking, as I am not, to fe-lights of the most superb, the most ge-lorious eloquence, for, as I may say, never before have I witnessed so brilliant, so grand, so magnificent a gathering as that which I see here before me tuh-

night; and I am complimented at being called on to address you, although I know that my poor self can tell you nothing which this magnificent assemblage already is not fully aware of, but my blood stirs within me, my pulses leap, and I gaze out over this wonderful convocation of the intellect, the acumen, the power, the very life itself, of this great city, and I am constrained to say that never before have I seen so brilliant a gathering of this kind, which is much to your credit——"

A Voice: "What's he running for?"

Mr. McGuff gazes haughtily in the direction of the query. Then he pushes his fingers through his hair again, and talks for twenty minutes about the problems of the Government as he sees them, which consist, mostly, of the desirability of keeping his party and himself in power. He finishes with a tender tribute to the ladies in the gallery, which they applaud ecstatically.

The Toastmaster: "I am sure we all feel highly edified by the last speaker's remarks, and I wish to say, at this point, that we have with

us to-night Mr. J. Chylde Childers, the celebrated poet, who has kindly consented to read us an original poem. 'Poetry,' as the poet says, 'has power to soothe the savage breast,' not, of course, that there are any such here, but we all adore poetry, I am sure, and Mr. Childers has dashed this off for our especial benefit. Mr. Childers."

Mr. Childers arises. He wears a long, flowing tie with his Tuxedo, and has a pale and distraught look. Mr. Childers is a bookkeeper in a wholesale grocery house in the day-

time, but is a poet at night. He smiles and says: "Gentlemen, I have prepared a little thing for your delectation, which I have called 'A Reverie in Purple'—a poor thing, but mine own." He draws out a large roll of manuscript and reads:

"Ah, Life, thou bring'st me little joy,
Thou bring'st me only pain ;
Thou art'st a hollow, shallow toy
Mix'st up with sordid gain.
Thou'st lasts a few, short, weary years
And then we get'st surcease—
So off with dreary, darkling fears
That in our souls do crease,
And from Lethe's stream now quaff with me
And join in my Purple Reverie."

Whereupon Mr. Childers reads forty-seven more stanzas of his poem, each stanza telling of some new phase of his reverie, which is a fine, sloppy, sentimental reverie. As he recites the lines:

"And in emblossomed floral bowers
When soul met soul in purple light,"

there is a loud cry of "Mush! Mush! Mush!" This rather disconcerts the poet, and he hurries through his remaining stanzas, while the young men at the end table chant: "Mush! Mush! Mush-mush-mush!"

The Toastmaster (severely): "I regret that any of our company so far forgot themselves as to be rude to Mr. Childers, whom, I am sure, we all thank for his beautiful poem, which is very uplifting; but, as the hour is growing late, I will be brief in my introductory remarks and only say that we have with us to-night that celebrated rancoontoor, I should say rangcongteur, Mr. Claude Chestnutt, who has kindly consented to tell us a few stories. Mr. Chestnutt."

Mr. Chestnutt is discovered to

be a short, stout gentleman, very self-possessed, who moves back to the end of the hall so everybody can see him, and begins a long and involved story about a negro, a mule, two white men and a cotton field. He describes the negro with imitations, the mule with imitations, the white men with imitations, and the cotton with imitations. After he has talked half an hour he begins cautiously leading up to the point of his story, putting in all the detail he can think of, and using five or six dialects, in-

cluding one for the mule. This is the way it comes out:

"Scipio, you black rascal, did you-all mail that letter that was on my desk this morning?"

"Yassir, yassir, I reckon I done mail um."

"But, you black idiot, didn't you-all see it had no address on it?"

"Well, massa, I dun 'spect it wuz one 'f dem 'nonnymus letters."

Mr. Chestnutt pauses for his laugh, assuming a sort of a Gee!-I-can-do-better-than-that air. Then

he says: "Now I'll give you a short, new one I heard the other day. Two Irishmen eating together. One takes the mustard pot and puts a spoonful of mustard in his mouth. He begins to cry. 'Whot are yez cryin' about?" asks the other Mick. 'Sure, I'm cryin' because my poor father's did an' gone.' The other Mick puts a big spoonful of mustard in his mouth and begins to cry. 'Whot are yez cryin' for?" 'Sure, I'm cryin' becase ye didn't die whin y'r father did."

Judge Bolus and Mr. Skinnem laugh violently. "I hadn't heard it before for fifty years," says the Judge, gasping.

A Voice: "That'll be about all, Chestnutt."

Mr. Chestnutt looks around in an aggrieved manner and goes to his seat.

The Toastmaster: "And now, gentlemen—now—we shall have the treat of the evening. We have with us to-night a guest whom I have purposely reserved to the last, to top off this feast of reason and

flow of soul, as the poet says, to make this the most notable banquet ever held by this society. I refer, of course, to United States Senator Demosthenes Butt, who has honored us with his presence and who will speak on that inspiring topic: 'The Stars and Stripes.' Senator Butt."

The Senator had been sitting in a bored attitude for two hours. Now he brightens perceptibly, rises, bows to the Toastmaster and to the remaining diners and says orotundly: "Mr. Toastmaster"—then

he pauses for a moment, sweeps the room with his eyes and says, "and gentlemen: I have been highly edified this evening by the brilliant addresses I have heard, and I feel somewhat abashed" (pauses to let that sink into them; everybody laughs the sort of a laugh that means they all know what he can do when he lets out) —"I feel somewhat abashed in rising before you. Had I the legal clarity of vision of my friend, Judge Bolus" (bows to the Judge), "or the eloquence of my friend, Con-

gressman McGuff" (bows to McGuff), "I might, with better grace, presume on your patience; but as I am not so highly gifted I crave your forbearance, and say to you, in all sincerity, that whatever shortcomings I may have will be shortcomings of the head and not of the heart.

"Gentlemen, when Freedom tore the azure robe of night and set the stars in glory there, there was created a banner of light that shall ever proudly wave as the emblem of the free. Those stripes of glorious red and milky white, those

stars set on that gorgeous field of blue, the gonfalon of liberty, the standard of freedom, the pledge given by our forefathers and gallantly maintained by ourselves, that never in this country shall there be a throne, that never in this country shall there be aught but that life that is liberty and that liberty that is life.

" From where the great Atlantic surges on the rocky shores of our eastern coast to where the soft Pacific taps, with fairy fingers, the golden sands of our western shore,

from the ultramarine and pellucid depths of the Great Lakes to the balmy breezes that blow over the tiny and odorous wavelets of the green-embosomed Gulf, from where the Mississippi rises to where, the Queen of Rivers, she gives her largess to the ocean tides, from the pines of Maine to the cypresses of Florida, from the ruddy orchards of Washington to the gleaming gold of the orange groves of California — from North to South, from East to West, there rises the grand, antiphonal chorus, that mingles with

the music of the rolling spheres, that mighty pæan of praise and thanksgiving, that joyous anthem of the blest:

"'Hail! banner of freedom, blue and white and red. Hail! flag of deeds and destiny, spangled with shimmering stars. Hail! gonfalon of glory, my flag—your flag—OUR FLAG—hail! thrice hail! Never, NEVER, NEVER shall your glorious folds be furled; never, NEVER, NEVER shall you wave over aught but a free country and a free people, now and forevermore!'"

Senator Butt sinks into his seat, overcome with emotion. Everybody sings "America." The crowd goes out. The dinner is over.

In the cloakroom: "That was fine what the Senator said, wasn't it?"

"Yes; what was it?"

"I forget."

THE END

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